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تكلفة السّياسة في الأردن The Cost of Politics in Jordan





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2025



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Acknowledgment

This study was conducted with the support “Support to Democratic Reforms in Jordan”, which is funded by the European Union, and implemented by Expertise France and its partners: The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), and Canal France Internationale (CFI).

The authors would like to thank The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) for their contribution in developing the methodology, which was based on the global methodology created by WFD.

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Introduction

Parliamentary elections in Jordan represent one of the primary democratic tools that grant citizens the right to participate in political decision-making. However, the electoral process faces multiple challenges, chief among them being the increasing cost of political, which directly affects participation. This has become a significant barrier for many groups, particularly women, youth, and low-income individuals. The high costs of elections affect electoral competition and, in turn, impact the fairness and sustainability of the democratic process.

This report is part of ongoing efforts to understand the factors influencing the cost of politics in Jordan. It examines the political, legal, and social contexts and analyses the dynamics contributing to rising election costs. The study covers all stages of the electoral process, from early campaign preparations to post-election activities, shedding light on various funding sources and their implications for transparency and integrity. Furthermore, it explores how these costs affect parliamentary representation quality and public trust in the electoral system.

Given recent political reforms in Jordan, including constitutional and legal amendments, it is essential to assess their impact on reducing political costs and promoting equal opportunities for candidates. To achieve this, the report focuses on the parliamentary elections held in September 2024 as a case study, offering insights into the latest challenges and developments in this area.

The report aims to:

1. Analyse the political, legal, social, and economic contexts that shape the cost of politics in Jordan.
2. Understand the factors affecting political costs, including the electoral system, media campaigns, and political financing.
3. Examine the costs associated with different stages of the electoral process, from early campaigning to post-election activities.
4. Assess the various sources of electoral financing and their impact on electoral integrity.
5. Identify financial challenges that hinder the participation of women, youth, and disadvantaged groups in politics.
6. Analyze the effects of political costs on parliamentary representation quality and democratic trust.

7. Provide reform recommendations to enhance transparency and reduce the financial burden of political participation.

The cost of politics is a crucial factor in determining access to political participation, directly influencing candidates' ability to run and manage their electoral campaigns. This leads to disparities in opportunities among candidates. Additionally, high costs reinforce the influence of financial power in politics, potentially undermining principles of integrity and accountability.

Beyond financial challenges, the study highlights social and cultural aspects that influence political costs, such as gender roles and economic constraints that limit opportunities for women and youth to run for office. Through an in-depth analysis of these factors, the report aims to offer practical recommendations that help lower these costs and promote equal participation in political life.

The research methodology combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive analysis. The methodology included:

- Reviewing previous studies on election financing and political costs.
- Analysing the legal framework governing election spending and financial oversight.
- Conducting in-depth interviews with politicians, candidates, officials, and academics of both genders.
- Organising focus group discussions with representatives from civil society and political parties.
- Examining election expenditure data from the latest parliamentary elections to identify patterns and key challenges.

This report comes at a critical moment as Jordan undergoes political reforms aimed at enhancing political participation and reducing barriers for candidates, particularly disadvantaged groups. Through this integrated analysis, the report seeks to provide an evidence-based perspective to support policymakers and relevant institutions in developing fairer policies, enhancing transparency and accountability, and ensuring the sustainability of the democratic process in Jordan.

Executive Summary

Political engagement in Jordan is a complex and costly endeavor. The high cost of electoral campaigns poses a major barrier to fair political participation—particularly for disadvantaged groups such as women, youth, and individuals with limited income. This report analyses the factors influencing the cost of political engagement and assesses their impact on electoral integrity and the quality of democratic representation. It also offers recommendations to enhance transparency, reduce costs, and ensure equal opportunities.

Jordan's political system is shaped by a mix of tribal, partisan, and economic factors that directly influence the cost of running for office. Despite recent reforms—such as amending the election law to promote political parties and proportional representation and increasing the number of seats allocated to women and youth—high costs remain a significant challenge. Many candidates are deterred by the absence of adequate government support and the pervasive use of political money.

Factors Influencing the Cost of Political Engagement

1. Social and Political Factors

- Tribalism plays a central role in determining candidates' chances, often requiring significant spending on social events and direct services for voters.
- Political parties suffer from weak funding, pushing candidates to rely on self-financing or external support, which can compromise their independence.
- Disadvantaged groups face both financial and social barriers due to limited access to traditional funding networks available to traditional political powers and more established candidates.

2. Economic Factors and Their Impact on Campaigns

- The difficult economic situation fuels the use of political money, which in some cases reach the electoral crime level when candidates resort to vote-buying or making financial promises to secure support.
- Many candidates depend on personal funds or private sector support, creating conflicts of interest and compromising political decision-making down the line.

3. The Electoral System and Its Effect on Costs

- Although proportional list system might lead to a cost-saving approach when splitting the costs among lists candidates, but in the 2024 parliamentary election it has increased campaign costs, as some candidates beard the expense of group campaigns.

- Weak oversight of campaign spending allows wealthy candidates to exceed legal financial limits without accountability, worsening inequalities.

4. The Role of Media and Political Advertising in Increasing Costs

- Traditional advertising (e.g., billboards and banners) remains the most used and effective in Jordan, but it is among the most expensive items, giving the advantage to wealthy candidates.
- While social media is relatively low-cost, effective digital campaigns still require substantial investment in paid advertisements—limiting access for underfunded candidates.

Stages of Electoral Costs

- 1. Pre-Campaign Costs:** Includes registration fees, building support networks, and initial outreach via social media and community events.
- 2. Campaign Costs:** Covers advertising, office rentals, public event organization, and social gatherings—consuming the bulk of the budget.
- 3. Election Day Costs:** Involves paying delegates who to cover their transportation and meals, voter transportation (which is problematic but considered an accepted cost in Jordan), and logistics to ensure smooth operations.
- 4. Post-Election Costs:** Includes providing specific social services and maintaining political offices for continuity.

Funding Sources and Their Impact on Transparency

- 1. Official Funding (Governmental and Party-Based):** Limited public support for parties and candidates forces reliance on self-funding or private donations.
- 2. Self-Financing:** The main source of campaign funding, but it disadvantages candidates with limited income.
- 3. Private Sector Funding:** Creates conflicts of interest, as elected officials may become beholden to their funders, undermining policy independence.
- 4. Informal Funding:** Includes undeclared donations and vote-buying, threatening election integrity and eroding trust in democratic processes.

Impact of Costs on Women and Youth Participation

- **Women:** Face difficulties in securing funds due to social norms that prioritise male candidates, which also leads to lack of support from political parties or the private sector.

- **Youth:** Struggle with limited financial resources and political experience, reducing their competitiveness.
- The lack of funding results in reduced representation of these groups in elected bodies, affecting the diversity of political decision-making.

Implications for Democratic Processes

- 1. Undermining Equal Opportunity:** Candidacy becomes restricted to the wealthy or those backed by powerful actors, weakening fair representation.
- 2. Reinforcing Political Corruption:** Elected officials may be compelled to make concessions to funders, affecting public policy.
- 3. Eroding Trust in the Electoral System:** The prevalence of political money dissuades citizens from participating, believing elections no longer reflect their true will.

Recommendations and Proposed Solutions

1. Legislative Reforms

- Set strict caps on campaign spending and enforce penalties for violations.
- Regulate political advertising and provide free media space for all candidates.

2. Enhance Transparency

- Require candidates and MPs to disclose funding sources and strengthen the role of the Independent Electoral Commission in oversight on campaigns and political parties financing.

3. Support for Disadvantaged Groups

- Create dedicated funding mechanisms for women and youth and lower their registration fees.
- Offer training opportunities to enhance their campaign management skills.

4. Strengthen Political Party Engagement

- Tie government financial support for parties to their inclusion of women and youth on candidate lists.

This study confirms that the high cost of political engagement in Jordan is one of the greatest challenges facing democracy. It undermines equal opportunity and amplifies the influence of money in public decision-making. To ensure fair and inclusive elections, legislative and financial reforms are needed to increase transparency, reduce costs, and support the participation of disadvantaged groups—laying the foundation for a more just and representative political system for all segments of society.

Chapter One: **General Framework of the Study**

1. The Political Context in Jordan

Jordan's political system is a constitutional monarchy in which the King holds extensive executive and legislative powers, while the Parliament serves as one of the primary democratic institutions. The Parliament consists of an elected House of Representatives and an appointed Senate. Despite ongoing legal developments, challenges remain in ensuring fair and transparent elections, with the cost of electoral campaigns becoming a significant barrier for many candidates, particularly those from disadvantaged groups.

Jordan's political landscape is heavily influenced by tribal and social factors, which play a crucial role in determining candidates' chances of success. Political competition varies among candidates, with women and youth independent candidates facing even greater challenges than those affiliated with political parties or individuals with financial and tribal influence.

2. The Legal Framework for Elections and Campaign Financing

Jordan's electoral system is governed by the Parliamentary Elections Law No. (4) of 2022 and its amendments, which were introduced to improve representation and enhance transparency. Recent amendments have included the adoption of an open-list proportional representation system on the district level and closed lists on the national level, with an increase in quota seats allocated to women and other groups, aiming to foster greater political inclusivity.

Campaign financing regulations form a critical aspect of the legal framework. The law mandates candidates to disclose their sources of funding and electoral expenditures. However, enforcing these regulations remains a challenge, as oversight bodies struggle to track actual campaign spending, leaving room for unofficial financing that may compromise electoral integrity. This is clearly seen when tracking non-partisan individual lists on the district level where there is no institution (political party) that is obliged to submit its audited budget.

Furthermore, Jordan does not provide direct public funding for candidates, forcing them to rely on self-financing, business sector contributions, or tribal support. This dependence often leads to conflicts of interest post-elections. While there is a legal spending cap on campaign expenditures, the absence of effective monitoring mechanisms allows for significant financial violations, creating an uneven playing field among candidates, especially when candidates spend on their own outside of their political parties.

3. Social and Cultural Dynamics and Their Impact on the Political Process

Tribal affiliations and social networks are among the most influential factors in Jordanian elections. Many candidates depend on their tribal backing to secure votes and campaign funding, shaping electoral dynamics that prioritize tribal loyalty over political programs or reform agendas.

Media and political advertising also play a key role in shaping public opinion and increasing campaign costs. Candidates who can afford to invest in traditional and digital media gain a competitive advantage, widening the gap between wealthy candidates and those with limited financial resources.

Women and youth continue to face significant barriers to political participation despite efforts to enhance their representation. In addition to financial constraints, women encounter societal restrictions related to gender and age discrimination that limit their ability to compete effectively. Meanwhile, young candidates struggle with limited financial resources and societal skepticism regarding their political leadership capabilities.

4. Recent Political Reforms and Their Impact on the Electoral Landscape

In recent years, Jordan has implemented several political reforms aimed at improving the electoral process. Key reforms include:

- Amending the Elections Law to increase representation for disadvantaged groups through a quota system.
- Strengthening the role of the Independent Election Commission in ensuring electoral integrity.
- Revising the Political Parties Law to encourage youth and women's participation in political parties and decision-making.

Despite the significance of these reforms, they have not directly addressed the issue of political costs, which remains a major obstacle to fair and balanced political participation. Given these challenges, the role of key stakeholders—including civil society organisations and governmental institutions—is crucial in developing policies and mechanisms to reduce financial influences on elections and enhance campaign finance transparency.

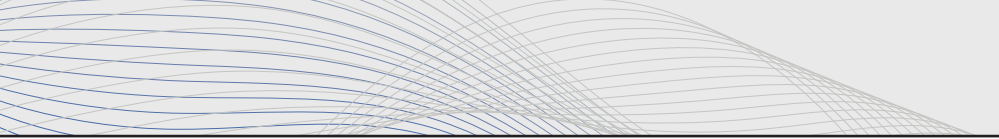
The political, legal, and social context in Jordan forms the foundation for understanding the factors affecting the cost of politics. While political reforms continue, the primary challenge remains ensuring equal opportunities for all candidates and enhancing transparency in electoral financing. This chapter underscores the need to address political costs as part of broader efforts to strengthen Jordan's democratic system, a topic that will be further explored in the following chapters.

Chapter Two:

Factors

Influencing the

Cost of Politics



The cost of politics in Jordan is a crucial factor in determining the nature of political participation and the ability of individuals to run for elections and compete effectively. This factor influences the composition of candidates and political actors, limiting the participation of individuals who lack sufficient financial resources while granting wealthy candidates or those supported by powerful entities an unfair competitive advantage.

Several factors shape the cost of politics, most notably social and political contexts, including tribal influence, party loyalties, and social constraints imposed on certain groups such as women and youth. In the Jordanian political system, tribal support remains a key component of electoral campaigns, imposing additional expenses on any candidate, including organising social events and providing services to secure tribal endorsements. As for political parties, despite their growing role, their weak financial standing forces many candidates to rely on their own resources or seek support from other sources, which may later lead to conflicts of interest.

Economically, there is an increased prevalence of political money, where votes are bought, or financial incentives are provided to influence voters. Additionally, the electoral tradition itself, which is based on tribal and social norms that require unnecessary expenditures, increases the financial burden on candidates, as it requires greater financial contributions.

The media plays a significant role in determining election costs, as political advertising—whether through traditional media or social media—requires substantial budgets to ensure outreach to voters. With weak oversight over electoral spending especially on social media, financially influential candidates enjoy a stronger media presence, exacerbating the imbalance between candidates.

Ultimately, the cost of politics in Jordan presents a major challenge that limits the ability of financially disadvantaged groups to run for elections and affects the integrity of the democratic process. Therefore, adopting stricter regulatory policies and enhancing transparency in campaign financing is essential to ensuring fair competition and broader participation in political life.

1. Social and Political Factors and Their Impact on Costs

A. Tribalism and Its Role in Raising Candidacy Costs

Tribalism plays a pivotal role in Jordan's political landscape, where tribes form a central part of electoral alliances and influence voter choices. Many candidates rely on tribal support as a crucial element of their campaigns, which imposes significant financial obligations on them, whether in terms of funding social events or covering campaign expenses within their tribe. In discussion sessions conducted with some candidates, many noted that while tribal affiliation could provide a substantial electoral advantage

by securing votes, it also places a heavy financial burden on candidates, who find themselves compelled to meet costly social and financial expectations.

“The tribe offers a significant advantage in securing votes, but at the same time, it imposes a heavy financial burden on male and female candidates, who find themselves obliged to meet costly social and financial expectations.”

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Central Region

The Impact of Tribal Obligations on Campaign Costs

Candidates seeking tribal support must organize numerous meetings and gatherings, which often include hosting large banquets and mobilizing voters through direct services to individuals and families within the tribe. These services may include covering medical expenses, providing direct financial aid, or even securing jobs for voters or their relatives after winning the election. This type of spending not only financially burdens the candidate but also reinforces a model of «service-based politics» rather than «policy-based politics,» leading to higher campaign expenditures without focusing on substantive political agendas.

“Candidates seeking the support of their tribe are expected to organise numerous meetings and gatherings, which often include hosting large banquets and mobilising voters by providing direct services to individuals and families within the tribe.”

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Southern Region

Intra-Tribal Competition Increases Candidacy Costs

Competition within the same tribe is another factor that drives up election costs, as multiple candidates from the same tribe often run against each other, forcing each to spend more to secure the backing of different family branches. In areas with strong tribal presence, candidates are expected to intensify their spending on banquets, meetings, and direct services to gather public support. This makes it difficult for independent candidates or those without significant financial backing to enter the electoral race, resulting in a political environment that favors financially capable candidates or those supported by extensive tribal networks.

“Candidates seeking the support of their tribe are expected to organise numerous meetings and gatherings, which often include hosting large banquets and mobilising voters by providing direct services to individuals and families within the tribe.”

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Southern Region

The Negative Impact of Tribalism on Equal Opportunities Among Candidates

Beyond financial burdens, tribalism limits the opportunities for candidates who do not belong to large families or lack strong tribal backing. Despite reforms aimed at strengthening party politics and empowering youth and women in politics, tribal alliances continue to play a strong role in directing votes, making it difficult for candidates who rely on political programmes rather than tribal support to succeed, which is something expected to decrease over time with the implementation of the political modernisation plan.

“It is difficult for candidates who rely on electoral programmes rather than tribal support to succeed—though this is expected to decline over time with the implementation of the political modernisation plan.”

— Stakeholder Interview, Female Participant

Political Money and the Strengthening of Tribal Influence

In some cases, tribal support becomes a means of enhancing political money, where tribal networks are leveraged to collect funding from businessmen or other supporting entities in exchange for promises of political favors or implementing specific agendas after securing parliamentary seats. These practices distort the electoral process by making financial influence the decisive factor in winning elections rather than competence and political programmes.

“Tribal support has become a means of reinforcing political money, where financial influence becomes the decisive factor in determining winners rather than competence or political programmes.”

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Southern Region

Overall, the significant influence of tribalism in Jordanian elections creates an uneven playing field for candidates. Those with strong tribal support enjoy a clear competitive advantage, while independent candidates or those from non-tribal backgrounds face immense financial challenges that hinder their success. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive reforms in the election law and electoral campaigns instructions and regulations, including more strict oversight of electoral spending, supporting young and female candidates, and encouraging an electoral culture based on policy-driven campaigns rather than tribal considerations.

B. Party Politics: Between Theory and Practice

Despite ongoing government efforts to strengthen the role of political parties in Jordan, parties still face significant challenges in terms of financing and societal influence. Weak funding remains one of the biggest obstacles for political parties,

as most, especially emerging parties, lack stable income sources to finance their election campaigns and support their candidates effectively. In discussion sessions with candidates and party members, many noted that financial support from parties remains very limited, pushing candidates to seek self-financing or external funding, which opens the door to conflicts of interest and undemocratic influences on the political process.

Weak Financial Infrastructure of Political Parties

Most political parties in Jordan rely on membership fees and donations as primary funding sources, which are insufficient to support competitive election campaigns. Some parties receive government funding, but this support is often inadequate to cover the high costs of election campaigns, especially with rising expenses for media advertisements, event organization, and public outreach meetings.

“The support is insufficient to cover the high costs of election campaigns, especially with the rising expenses of media advertising, event organisation, and public gatherings.”

— Stakeholder Interview, Female Participant

Additionally, new parties struggle to establish a sustainable financial support base due to their limited societal reach and lack of continuous funding. As a result, party candidates are often forced to finance their campaigns independently, placing them at a disadvantage compared to independent candidates supported by various entities or those with personal financial resources allowing them to compete without financial strain.

Party Funding and Its Impact on Candidate Independence

Due to the inability of parties to provide sufficient financial support to candidates, many are compelled to seek alternative funding sources, such as bank loans or financial backers who offer conditional funding in exchange for political representation in parliament. This phenomenon directly affects candidate independence, as they become indebted to their financiers, which may influence their political decisions once in office.

“Many of them are forced to seek alternative sources of funding, such as bank loans or financial backers who offer conditional support in exchange for representing their interests.”

— Focus Group, Female Participant, Northern Region

Legal and Institutional Barriers Facing Parties

Despite political reforms aimed at strengthening party roles, several legal and institutional challenges limit their effectiveness in the political landscape. Jordan's political culture is still not fully prepared for party-based politics, as many citizens hesitate to join parties due to concerns about restrictions or future repercussions. Furthermore, laws related to party financing do not provide clear and sustainable mechanisms for supporting parties financially and politically, leading to their marginalization in political life.

Logistical and Organizational Challenges Facing Parties

Political parties in Jordan struggle to organise successful election campaigns due to financial constraints. For example, parties cannot afford large public gatherings or effectively promote their electoral programmes through media, making it harder for party-affiliated candidates to reach voters compared to independent candidates or those backed by external supporters. Additionally, the lack of coordination between parties and their candidates sometimes leads to scattered efforts, which might lead to increased financial burdens.

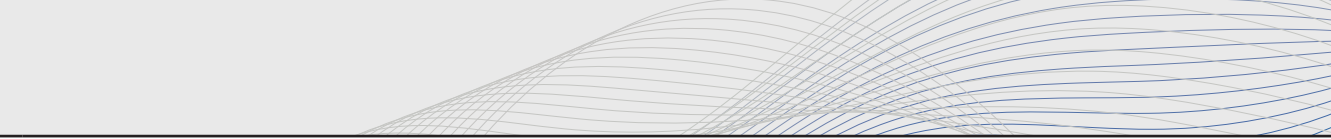
"Political parties are unable to finance large public gatherings or effectively promote their electoral programmes through the media."

— Stakeholder Interview, Male Participant

The Need for Reforms to Strengthen Party Funding

Enhancing the role of political parties in Jordan requires financial and organisational reforms that support candidate independence and create a fair competitive environment. This can be achieved through:

- **Providing sustainable government funding:** The government should establish better funding mechanisms for political parties, allocating financial support based on a new criteria.
- **Stronger oversight of funding sources:** Regulations should prevent conflicts of interest between candidates and private sector financiers to ensure independent political decisions.
- **Encouraging individual donations and fair campaign financing:** Crowdfunding programs can enable parties to collect donations from individuals rather than relying on a few major donors.
- **Enhancing transparency and accountability:** Parties should be required to publish the periodic reports they submit on their funding sources and expenditures to build voter trust and strengthen political legitimacy.



In summary, party politics in Jordan faces significant financial challenges, affecting their ability to provide equal support to all of their candidates, including women and youth, so they can compete effectively in elections. Without substantial reforms in party financing mechanisms, political competition in Jordan will remain dominated by financially privileged groups, reinforcing the influence of political money and limiting electoral fairness. Strengthening sustainable party funding is a crucial step toward achieving a more just democracy and broader political participation.

C. Participation of Women and Youth Amid High Political Costs

The participation of women and youth in political life is a key pillar of achieving a more inclusive democracy. However, the high cost of politics represents a major barrier to their entry into electoral competition. Both youth and women face multiple challenges related to financing and social restrictions, which significantly reduces their chances of running for office and winning compared to candidates with stronger financial and social influence.

In the current House of Representatives, only six Members of Parliament are under the age of 35—three elected through the national electoral district and three through local electoral districts. As for women, there are 27 female MPs, including nine elected on the national electoral list and 18 who hold seats through the women's quota in local districts. These figures illustrate the ongoing structural barriers that limit meaningful youth and female political representation.

Financial Challenges Facing Women and Youth

The lack of funding is the biggest obstacle for young and female candidates, as election campaigns require substantial financial resources to cover advertising costs, public meetings, transportation, and campaign headquarters. In interviews with some young candidates, they confirmed that campaign expenses are extremely high, making it impossible for them to run without external financial support, which is often unavailable.

“Campaign costs are extremely high, and they cannot afford them without external financial support, which is often unavailable to them.”

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Central Region

Weak party support: Political parties do not provide sufficient financial support for young or female candidates running on the local lists, forcing them to rely on self-financing, which is not feasible for most. Additionally, compared to male candidates, young and female candidates have weaker traditional support networks, making it harder for them to secure financial backing from influential figures or donors.

“Political parties do not provide sufficient financial support for young or female candidates running on local district lists, which forces them to seek self-financing.”

— Focus Group, Female Participant, Southern Region

Lack of sustainable government funding: There are no effective government mechanisms to encourage youth and women’s participation in elections. Some programs offer guidance and training, but they do not provide real financial support for election campaigns, making high campaign costs a significant barrier to their participation.

Social Constraints and Cultural Challenges

In addition to financial challenges, women and youth face societal barriers that limit their ability to run for office and win elections.

1. Challenges Facing Women in Politics

- There is still a traditional societal perception that politics is a male-dominated field, which creates additional challenges for women candidates, such as online harassment and attempts to undermine their political credibility.
- Many female candidates experience family or societal pressure discouraging them from running, either due to fears of public criticism or the belief that women should not hold leadership positions.
- Despite the quota system designed to ensure women’s representation, many female candidates struggle to secure the necessary financial support to launch competitive campaigns, reducing their chances of success.

“There is still a traditional societal perception that politics is a male-dominated field, which presents additional challenges for women candidates—such as facing online harassment and attempts to undermine their political credibility.”

— Stakeholder Interview, Female Participant

2. Challenges Facing Youth in Politics

- Youth are often perceived as lacking political experience, leading some voters to hesitate in supporting them and pushing political parties to favor older candidates with stronger financial and social influence.

- Young candidates face difficulties in building strong support networks to secure the resources needed for their campaigns due to the age discrimination against them.
- In some areas, tribal values still prioritise older candidates, limiting the opportunities for young people to run and win, even if they have strong electoral programmes and high qualifications.

“Youth are perceived as lacking political experience, which makes some voter groups hesitant to support them.”

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Central Region

The Impact of High Costs on Women and Youth Participation

The rising cost of election campaigns reduces the number of youth and women candidates, as running for office becomes restricted to those with sufficient financial resources or strong backing from influential entities. This directly impacts political diversity, as parliament ends up representing a narrow group of traditional politicians, while the groups most in need of political change remain disadvantaged.

Moreover, the lack of financial support prevents many women and young candidates from continuing political work even after elections, as they are unable to finance political activities that would help them build long-term political influence. This leads to a continuous cycle of political exclusion, where the gap between traditional candidates and young or female candidates persists without tangible solutions.

“The lack of financial support prevents many women and youth from continuing their political work even after elections, as they are unable to fund the political activities needed to build their long-term presence.”

— Stakeholder Interview, Female Participant

Proposed Solutions to Encourage Women and Youth Participation

To address these challenges, new policies must be adopted to reduce the financial burden of election campaigns and enhance support for women and youth in politics. Some possible solutions include:

- **Enhancing party support for young and female candidates:** Political parties should allocate a portion of their budgets to support financially struggling candidates instead of relying only on well-funded candidates.
- **Reducing the cost of election campaigns:** This can be achieved by providing free campaign spaces and promoting the use of social media as a low-cost alternative to traditional advertising.

- **Raising public awareness about the importance of youth and women's representation:** Efforts should be made to shift societal perceptions of youth and women in politics, encouraging voters to support candidates based on their qualifications and programs rather than traditional factors such as tribal affiliation or financial influence.
- **Strengthening oversight of political money:** Strict regulations must be enforced to limit the influence of money in elections, preventing vote-buying or unfair financial advantages that hinder candidates with limited resources.

The high cost of election campaigns remains a significant barrier to women and youth participation in Jordanian politics. Without serious steps to support these groups, the electoral system will continue to face challenges in achieving fair and inclusive representation. There is an urgent need to enhance fair and transparent financing mechanisms and reform electoral policies to ensure true and effective participation of women and youth in Jordanian political life.

“There is an urgent need to strengthen fair and transparent financing mechanisms and to reform electoral policies to make them more equitable, ensuring genuine and effective participation of women and youth.”

— Stakeholder Interview, Male Participant

2. Economic Factors and Their Impact on Election Campaigns

A. The Economic Situation and Its Effect on Candidacy

The economic situation in Jordan directly affects the cost of politics, as economic factors play a crucial role in determining individuals' ability to run for elections and compete effectively. With rising unemployment rates and increasing financial pressures on citizens, election campaigns have become more difficult to finance. As a result, many candidates either seek external funding sources or withdraw from the race due to their inability to bear the costs.

The Impact of Unemployment and Declining Living Standards on Elections: A large segment of Jordanian society suffers from persistent economic difficulties, with rising living costs and decreasing income levels making campaign expenditures a major challenge for many candidates. Under these conditions, it becomes difficult, particularly for young and independent candidates, to secure the necessary budgets for advertising, public meetings, and logistical expenses.

"It is difficult for young candidates to secure the budgets needed for advertising, public gatherings, and other logistical expenses."

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Southern Region

Increased Reliance on Political Money: Due to the economic crisis, political money has become a primary tool influencing election outcomes. Some candidates with significant financial resources exploit voters' financial needs by offering monetary incentives or direct services in exchange for votes. Reports indicate that the crime of vote-buying has become a widespread practice, where financial payments or public services are provided to secure electoral support. This phenomenon undermines the integrity of the democratic process, as candidates are elected based on their financial capabilities rather than their political programs or qualifications.

"Some candidates with substantial financial resources exploit voters' need for money."

— Focus Group, Female Participant, Central Region

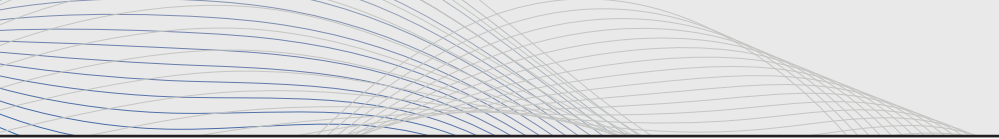
The Effect of Economic Conditions on Campaign Financing: Candidates without financial backing struggle significantly to fund their campaigns, forcing them to rely on self-financing or take out loans, which increases their financial burdens. Additionally, the absence of effective government support for candidates exacerbates the gap between wealthy candidates and those who lack financial resources.

"Candidates without financial backing face great difficulty in funding their campaigns, often having to rely on self-financing or taking out loans."

— Focus Group, Female Participant, Southern Region

The Need for Economic Reforms in Political Financing: To counter the impact of economic conditions on the electoral process, reforms must be implemented to reduce the influence of political money and enhance transparency in campaign financing. This can be achieved through:

- Strict limits on election spending to ensure equal opportunities among all candidates.
- Launching big awareness raising campaigns on the importance of inclusion and equal electoral opportunities for all, including youth and women.
- Strengthening oversight mechanisms on political financing to prevent economic hardship from being exploited to influence election results.



Given the current economic challenges, running for elections in Jordan has become a major financial burden, limiting many individuals' ability to participate in politics. The growing reliance on political money creates an unfair electoral environment, where financially privileged candidates have a greater chance of winning compared to competitors with fewer resources. Evidence of this includes the high re-election rate—52 out of 138 Members of Parliament are returning MPs—suggesting that incumbency and access to resources significantly influence electoral success. Additionally, the professional backgrounds of many elected candidates point to a concentration of individuals with established financial or business networks, further highlighting the economic barriers to entry for underrepresented groups. Therefore, developing fairer financial policies is essential to improving electoral integrity and achieving more equitable political representation.

B. Self-Financing and Dependence on Influential Figures

Financing remains one of the biggest challenges facing candidates in Jordanian elections, as many rely on self-financing or seek support from business figures and influential individuals to compensate for the lack of adequate government assistance. Given the high costs of election campaigns, candidates often face two primary choices: either fund their campaigns using personal savings or secure financial backing from external sources, often with political or economic interests at stake.

Self-Financing and Its High Costs: Some candidates, particularly independents, resort to self-financing their campaigns, which is highly expensive, requiring significant spending on media advertisements, renting campaign offices, and organizing public events and meetings. In many cases, this depletes the candidate's personal resources, potentially discouraging them from running in future elections if they fail to secure victory.

"Some candidates resort to self-financing their campaigns, which is very costly, as it requires covering a wide range of expenses."

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Northern Region

Reliance on Business Figures and Influential Individuals: Due to the high costs of election campaigns, many candidates are compelled to seek financial support from businessmen and influential figures who provide funding in exchange for securing their political or economic interests after the elections. This form of financing leads to conflicts of interest, as elected candidates often feel indebted to their financiers, limiting their independence and ability to make decisions that serve the public interest.

The Risks of Political Corruption and Its Impact on Democracy: When candidates rely on financial backing from entities with vested interests, the risk of political corruption increases. Financial influence is often used to shape public policies in favor of specific groups rather than serving the broader national interest. In many cases, this results in legislation or decisions that benefit financial backers instead of addressing the needs of society, thereby undermining trust in the democratic process and reducing electoral integrity.

The Need for Reforms to Enhance Transparency in Election Financing: To address the challenges associated with self-financing and reliance on influential figures, reforms must be adopted to ensure transparency in political financing, such as:

- Providing clear instructions and regulations for candidates, to ensure fair and balanced political participation.
- Imposing limits on individual donations and financial contributions to prevent any single entity from exerting disproportionate influence on the political process.
- Enhancing oversight mechanisms on political financing by requiring candidates to disclose their funding sources and ensuring compliance with financial transparency laws.

Reliance on self-financing or support from influential figures exacerbates electoral inequalities, as candidates with strong financial backing enjoy greater chances of winning compared to those who lack such resources. To ensure fairer elections, stricter policies must be implemented to monitor election financing and promote transparency, reducing the impact of money in politics and enhancing the independence of the democratic process.

“It is essential to implement stricter policies to monitor electoral financing and enhance transparency, which would help reduce the influence of money on politics.”

— Stakeholder Interview, Female Participant

C. Political Money and Its Impact on Electoral Fairness

Political money is one of the most significant factors affecting the integrity and fairness of elections in Jordan, as its widespread use undermines democratic principles and equitable representation. According to testimonies collected from candidates, the crime of vote-buying has become a common practice, especially amid the economic challenges facing citizens. Candidates exploit voters' financial needs to influence their electoral choices.

The forms of political money vary, ranging from direct payments to voters and providing in-kind assistance to financing public services in certain areas in exchange for votes. This gives an advantage to candidates with strong financial resources while weakening the chances of young or independent candidates who cannot compete with these practices.

“Political money gives an advantage to candidates with financial influence, while weakening the chances of young candidates.”

— Focus Group, Female Participant, Central Region

Beyond its impact on election outcomes, political money fosters political corruption, as elected officials become more loyal to their financial backers rather than to their voters. This weakens accountability and affects the quality of legislation and public policies. To combat this issue, strict restrictions on election financing must be enforced, and regulatory bodies must be strengthened to ensure fair electoral competition.

3. The Electoral System and Its Impact on Costs

The electoral system is one of the key factors influencing the cost of election campaigns in Jordan. It determines the nature of competition among candidates and affects financing requirements. With the adoption of the proportional list system, the candidacy process has undergone significant changes, leading to increased financial burdens on candidates. Additionally, the lack of effective financial oversight mechanisms has resulted in disparities among candidates, as wealthier candidates can exceed the legal spending limits without consequences, further exacerbating the lack of fairness in the electoral process.

“With the adoption of the proportional list system, the nature of candidacy has changed significantly, increasing the financial burden on candidates.”

— Focus Group, Female Participant, Southern Region

A. The Impact of the List System on Costs

With the adoption of the proportional list system, candidacy is no longer an individual endeavor; candidates are now required to join electoral lists and share campaign costs, which should be a positive thing; but in many cases, this system has significantly increased expenses, as candidates must not only finance their personal campaigns but also contribute to the overall campaign expenses of the list to which they belong.

Increased Financial Burdens Due to Collective Candidacy: Candidates must contribute to various campaign activities for the entire list, including:

- Organising public events.
- Purchasing advertising space in media outlets and on social media platforms.
- Financing campaign headquarters.
- Covering transportation and logistical costs.

“Candidates are expected to contribute to the overall promotional activities of the list, such as organising public events and funding campaign headquarters.”

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Northern Region

In some lists, significant financial disparities exist among candidates, with those who have greater financial resources bearing a larger share of campaign costs. This creates an unequal environment within the lists themselves.

Buying Positions on the List: One of the phenomena associated with the proportional list system is the sale of rankings within lists. Candidates are often required to pay large sums to secure a higher position on the list, as list order significantly impacts election success. Some testimonies indicate that certain parties and electoral blocs have set specific prices for top spots on the list, making candidacy extremely expensive, particularly for those without financial backers or strong funding sources.

B. Lack of Effective Financial Oversight Mechanisms

Despite the existence of laws setting campaign spending limits, there are clear shortcomings in their enforcement, allowing some candidates to exceed legal spending caps without accountability. This creates a significant financial gap among candidates, with wealthier individuals exploiting weak oversight to their advantage, granting them an unfair edge over competitors.

Weak Enforcement of Campaign Spending Laws: Jordanian laws impose a specific ceiling on campaign expenditures for each candidate. According to Article 6(a) of the 2024 Executive Instructions on Disclosure of Campaign Financing Resources and Regulation of Expenditures, the maximum allowable spending includes in-kind contributions, donations, and self-financing—whether in cash or in-kind—and must not exceed 100,000 Jordanian Dinars for lists contesting a local electoral district, and 500,000 Jordanian Dinars for those running at the national electoral district level.

However, several loopholes allow candidates to bypass these restrictions, including:

- There is no clear mechanism of tracking expenditures of local districts independent lists since they are not part of political parties that are obliged by law to submit their annual budgets and expenditures.

- Candidates on political parties' lists spend on their own in some cases making it very challenging to track their spending.
- The lack of clear mechanisms of monitoring expenditures during campaigning.

In addition to that, the legislations should include methods of identifying electoral corruption, especially:

- Using undisclosed funding from influential figures or private entities
- Providing services and privileges to voters instead of direct spending on traditional advertising
- Leveraging tribal networks to collect unregistered donations

Lack of Oversight on Funding Sources: There are no effective mechanisms to regulate campaign financing sources. In many cases, undocumented funding is used, provided by external entities or political backers seeking to influence candidates after they win. This leads to conflicts of interest, where some members of parliament become indebted to those who funded their campaigns, impacting their political decisions.

Impact on Electoral Fairness: Due to the absence of effective financial oversight, the influence of political money on elections increases, leading to an unequal playing field for candidates. While some can spend hundreds of thousands of dinars on their campaigns, others struggle to secure the minimum funding needed to compete. This situation harms fair competition and strengthens the influence of financially powerful groups in the political landscape, disadvantaging independent candidates, youth, and women who lack comparable financial resources.

“While some candidates are able to spend hundreds of thousands of dinars on their campaigns, others face major challenges in securing even the minimum funding needed to compete.”

— Focus Group, Female Participant, Southern Region

Proposed Reforms to Ensure Fair Electoral Competition: Given the challenges posed by the proportional list system and the lack of effective financial oversight, comprehensive reforms are necessary to guarantee a fair electoral process, including:

- Developing more strict regulatory mechanisms to monitor campaign expenditures and verify funding sources
- Imposing high penalties on candidates who exceed the legally permitted spending limit
- Providing more equitable government financial support to independent candidates to ensure equal opportunities for all groups
- Eliminating the practice of selling rankings within lists through clear regulations preventing candidates from being financially exploited within electoral lists

The electoral system directly impacts the cost of election campaigns in Jordan. The proportional list system imposes additional financial burdens on candidates, especially due to collective campaign funding requirements and the phenomenon of buying rankings within lists. Furthermore, weak financial oversight mechanisms allow political money to exert greater influence, leading to significant disparities among candidates. To ensure the integrity of the electoral process, legislative reforms must be adopted to enhance transparency and curb financial influence in elections, thereby promoting fairer and more competitive elections in the future.

“Legislative reforms must be adopted to enhance transparency and limit financial influence in elections, contributing to fairer and more effective competition.”

— Stakeholder Interview, Female Participant

4. The Role of Media and Political Advertising in Increasing Costs

Media and political advertising play a crucial role in the electoral process, as candidates rely on various marketing strategies to communicate with voters and strengthen their political presence. However, the cost of political media during electoral campaigns is one of the most significant factors increasing the financial burden of candidacy, as candidates are often opt to spend large sums on advertising campaigns to ensure their messages reach a wide audience.

“Candidates find themselves spending large sums on advertising campaigns to ensure their messages reach a wide audience.”

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Central Region

A. The Costs of Traditional Advertising

Billboards, television, and radio advertisements are among the most expensive campaign tools, consuming a large portion of election budgets. Testimonies from candidates in recent elections indicate that many spent substantial amounts on traditional media advertising, making it difficult for independent or financially constrained candidates to compete on equal footing.

“Many candidates spent large amounts on traditional advertising, making it difficult for independent or financially constrained candidates to compete on equal footing.”

— Focus Group, Female Participant, Central Region

Television, Print, and Radio Ads: Broadcast advertising is particularly costly, making it inaccessible to many independent candidates or those without strong financial backing. In addition to TV and radio, some candidates use printed newspapers, which also require high fees for publishing political ads, further increasing campaign costs.

Billboard Advertising: Billboards remain a popular tool for political advertising in Jordan, installed in major cities and key areas to maximize candidate visibility. Costs vary depending on billboard size and location, but overall, they represent one of the most expensive campaign components, requiring high fees for renting advertising spaces, as well as expenses for design, printing, and installation.

“Billboards are among the most expensive elements of a campaign, as securing advertising space involves high fees—not to mention the cost of design, printing, and installation.”

— Stakeholder Interview, Male Participant

The Impact of Costs on Equal Opportunity: Given these high costs, candidates with limited budgets struggle to launch competitive advertising campaigns. This grants wealthier candidates an advantage in reaching voters and influencing their choices, creating an unfair electoral environment where financially privileged candidates enjoy a significant edge, while independent and young candidates face major challenges in conveying their messages and convincing voters of their platforms.

“Independent and young candidates face major challenges in getting their messages across and convincing voters of their programmes.”

— Focus Group, Female Participant, Central Region

B. Social Media and Its Impact on Election Campaigns

In recent years, social media has emerged as a primary political advertising tool, offering candidates a platform to reach a broad voter base at a lower cost than traditional media. However, effectively utilizing these platforms requires significant investment in paid advertisements and digital marketing strategies.

The Importance of Social Media in Election Campaigns: Platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube allow candidates to interact directly with voters, enabling them to present their election platforms and conduct awareness campaigns without the need for traditional advertising expenses. Social media is particularly useful for engaging younger voters, who tend to have lower electoral participation rates, providing candidates an opportunity to enhance their outreach to this demographic.

The Costs of Digital Marketing and Paid Ads: While social media appears to be a lower-cost alternative, effective digital campaigns still require significant spending on paid ads to ensure content reaches a larger audience. Social media platforms operate on pay-to-reach algorithms, meaning unpaid content has limited visibility, forcing candidates to allocate substantial budgets for online advertising.

“Although social media appears to be a lower-cost option, effective digital campaigns require significant spending on paid advertisements to ensure content reaches a wider audience.”

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Central Region

Limited Internet Access and Its Impact on Digital Campaigning: Despite the widespread availability of the internet in Jordan, certain regions still experience weak coverage or low penetration of smart devices, affecting some voters’ ability to follow digital campaigns. Additionally, a portion of the Jordanian population remains reliant on traditional media, making it difficult for candidates to solely depend on social media to reach all voter segments.

“A segment of Jordanian society relies primarily on traditional media.”

— Focus Group, Female Participant, Southern Region

C. The Impact of Media on Electoral Fairness

Traditional media, whether broadcast, radio, or print, tends to favor candidates with greater financial resources, as they can afford to purchase large advertising spaces or secure extensive media coverage, giving them a competitive advantage over candidates with fewer financial means.

In addition to financial disparities, socio-cultural attitudes toward women in leadership positions are often reinforced through media coverage, further limiting the visibility and credibility of female candidates. Studies and monitoring reports of past elections in Jordan have shown that women are underrepresented in political media coverage, and when featured, are often portrayed through a gendered lens that questions their competence or focuses on personal rather than political attributes. This biased representation stems from broader societal norms that continue to view leadership as a predominantly male domain. As a result, even when women have strong platforms or qualifications, their media exposure tends to be less substantive or more stereotypical, reducing their chances of being seen as viable candidates by the public. Addressing media bias is therefore not only a matter of financial fairness but also of challenging entrenched cultural perceptions that hinder women’s political participation.

Unbalanced Media Coverage: Some candidates struggle to obtain fair media exposure, as media outlets often focus on well-known candidates or those capable of funding extensive advertising campaigns. This weakens the chances of young and independent candidates, who may have strong programs but lack the financial resources to ensure consistent media presence.

Influence on Public Opinion: Given the critical role media plays in shaping public opinion, unequal media access directly affects election outcomes. Candidates with broad media exposure are better positioned to persuade voters, while others face significant obstacles in delivering their messages to the public.

“Unequal opportunities in media exposure directly affect election outcomes.”

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Northern Region

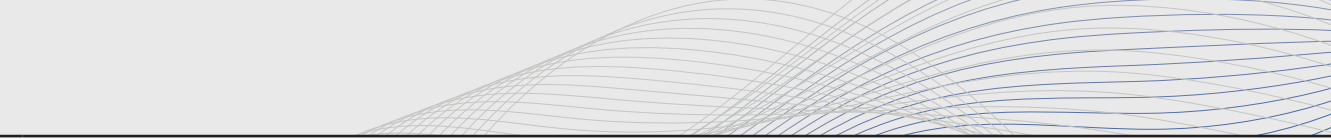
The Need for Media Regulations: To ensure fair competition, stricter regulations should be established to govern political advertising in media, ensuring equal exposure opportunities for all candidates. Transparency in campaign ad financing should also be strengthened, with spending sources monitored to prevent the misuse of political money in manipulating media coverage in favor of particular candidates.

Proposed Reforms for Fair Political Advertising: Media and political advertising play a key role in Jordanian elections, but they also significantly increase campaign costs, making competition unfair. Traditional advertising requires substantial budgets, favoring wealthier candidates, while social media—though cheaper—still demands financial investment for effective outreach.

To address these challenges, reforms should be implemented to ensure fair access to political advertising, such as:

- Setting a financial cap on paid advertisements in both traditional and social media.
- Imposing regulations on media outlets to ensure all candidates receive equal opportunities for exposure.
- Encouraging debates and free public forums where candidates can present their programs without requiring expensive advertising.

The high cost of political advertising remains one of the greatest challenges facing candidates in Jordan, as financial resources and media influence play a significant role in election outcomes. To achieve fairer elections, transparency in media financing must be reinforced, the impact of political money must be reduced, and equal opportunities should be provided for all candidates to reach voters.



The cost of politics in Jordan reflects the intersection of social, economic, and political factors, where high financial burdens limit the participation of underprivileged groups. Political money and the lack of effective oversight remain among the greatest challenges to Jordan's democratic process. Therefore, policies must be adopted to enhance transparency and reduce the influence of money in elections, ensuring a fair playing field for all candidates and strengthening the integrity of the electoral process.

“Transparency in media financing must be strengthened, the influence of political money reduced, and equal opportunities ensured for all candidates.”

— Stakeholder Interview, Female Participant

Chapter Three:

Cost Stages in the Electoral Process

The electoral process in Jordan is associated with high financial costs across multiple stages, with candidates incurring expenses from the moment they decide to run until after the results are announced. Costs vary among candidates based on several factors, such as party affiliation, level of financial support, and the social base backing the candidate. However, there are four primary stages that require significant financial expenditure: Pre-campaign costs, Campaign costs, Election day costs, and Post-election costs.

1. Pre-Campaign Costs

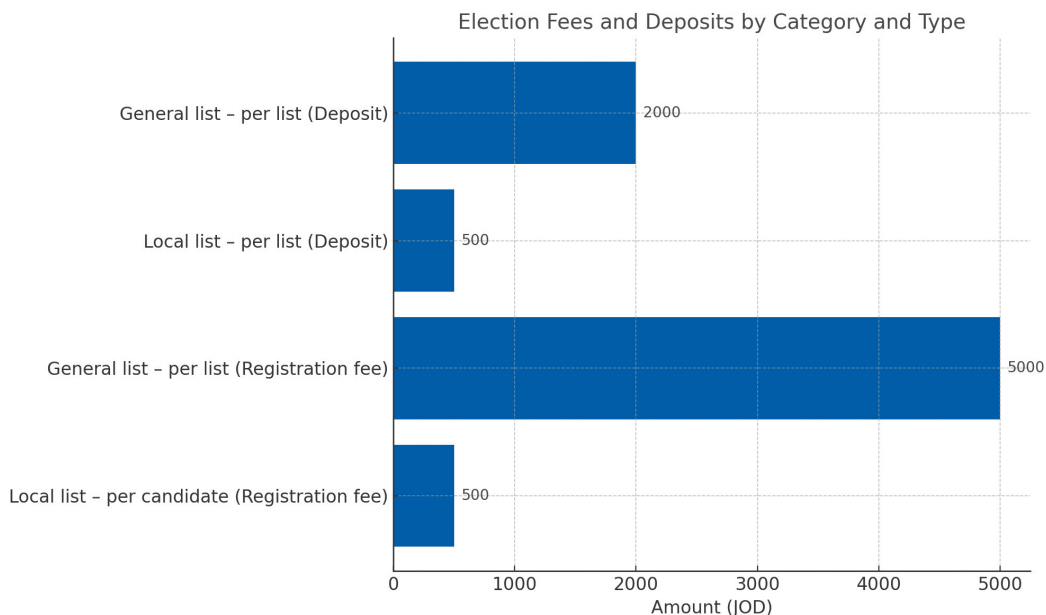
Before the official start of election campaigns, candidates go through a preparatory phase that involves planning, building a support network, and logistical preparations. This phase is crucial for defining the campaign's scope and ensuring its success later, but it also demands significant financial investments.

A. Organizational and Preparatory Costs

These costs include all logistical and administrative steps taken by candidates in preparation for their campaigns, such as:

- **Candidacy registration fees:** Submitting a candidacy application requires paying a fee determined by electoral laws, which varies based on the type of seat and the electoral list structure.

Category	Amount (JOD)	Description
Local electoral list – per candidate	500	Registration fee
General electoral list – per list	5,000	Registration fee
Local electoral list – per list	500	Deposit to ensure compliance with electoral campaign regulations
General electoral list – per list	2,000	Deposit to ensure compliance with electoral campaign regulations



- **Campaign team setup:** Candidates often hire political consultants, campaign managers, and media/public relations specialists, adding operational expenses for their salaries.

B. Early Publicity and Support Network Building

Before officially announcing their candidacy, many candidates engage in indirect publicity efforts to build their political reputation and strengthen their connections with voters. These activities include:

- **Meetings with community leaders:** Candidates hold private meetings with tribal representatives, business figures, and prominent figures in local communities, which require covering transportation, hospitality expenses, and sometimes symbolic gifts.
- **Internal tribal elections:** Many families and tribes hold internal elections to agree on candidates who will represent them in various constituencies.
- **Establishing an online presence:** Candidates launch social media pages, fund initial digital campaigns, and hire content management teams.
- **Participation in social activities:** Some candidates engage in charitable, sports, or cultural events to gain voter support, which involves additional financial commitments.

2. Campaign Costs

Once the campaign officially begins, candidates enter a phase that requires the highest levels of spending, as they work to influence voters through advertising, public events, and direct voter engagement. In Jordan, electoral campaigning is permitted from the date a candidacy application is officially accepted and must end 24 hours before the scheduled day of voting.

A. Advertising and Promotional Costs

Political advertising is one of the largest expenses in election campaigns and includes:

- **TV and radio advertisements:** Traditional media, such as television and radio, remain highly effective in reaching a large audience, but they require substantial financial investment.
- **Social media marketing:** Although online campaigns can be more cost-effective than traditional media, paid advertising on platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube still requires significant financial resources to achieve real impact.
- **Print materials and billboards:** This includes printing posters, distributing flyers, and installing large billboards, which consume a large portion of campaign budgets.

B. Event and Field Campaign Costs

Successful campaigns rely on direct interaction with voters through field activities, which include:

- **Election rallies:** Organising large gatherings requires renting venues, setting up sound systems, and arranging entertainment to attract attendees.
- **Community visits:** Candidates travel across cities and villages to meet voters in person, incurring expenses for transportation, accommodation, and support teams.
- **Hospitality expenses:** In some regions, candidates are expected to host large feasts during election gatherings, adding a significant financial burden.

C. Renting Campaign Offices

Every candidate requires at least one main campaign office, with some opening multiple offices in targeted areas, leading to expenses such as:

- **Office rental costs:** These vary by location but represent a major financial commitment, especially in large cities.
- **Office equipment and technology:** Includes computers, printers, communication tools, and promotional materials.
- **Staff salaries:** Campaign offices employ personnel to manage voter coordination, campaign operations, and administrative tasks.

3. Election Day Costs

Expenses peak on election day, as organising voter mobilisation efforts and monitoring election integrity require substantial financial resources.

A. Polling Agents and Observers

Candidates must deploy representatives and monitors to ensure smooth electoral procedures and prevent vote manipulation. These costs include:

- **Agent and observer wages:** Candidates hire dozens or even hundreds of representatives at polling stations, each of whom receives compensation for their work.
- **Training and supplies:** Observers require pre-election training and materials such as ID badges and legal documentation.

B. Logistics and Transportation Costs

- **Transporting voters:** In some areas, it became a culture that candidates arrange group transportation to help voters reach polling stations.
- **Administrative teams:** Campaigns employ logistical teams to coordinate between campaign offices and polling station representatives, adding operational costs.

C. Vote Buying Practices

While not legally sanctioned, vote buying remains a persistent and costly practice in some electoral contexts in Jordan. On election day, this may include offering money or gifts in exchange for votes—activities that significantly inflate campaign expenditures and undermine electoral integrity. These informal costs are often untraceable yet widely acknowledged, and they disproportionately benefit candidates with greater financial means. The prevalence of such practices not only distorts voter choice but also contributes to a political culture where financial power supersedes policy or merit.

4. Post-Election Costs

Even after the elections conclude, expenses do not stop. Elected officials continue to face financial obligations related to maintaining their political work.

A. Costs of Continuing Political Activities

- **Managing Political Offices:** Some members of parliament (MPs) maintain offices to serve their constituents, which requires funding for office rent, staff salaries, and community activities.
- **Participation in Political Events:** Some MPs continue to attend conferences, workshops, and political events, which incurs travel and accommodation costs.

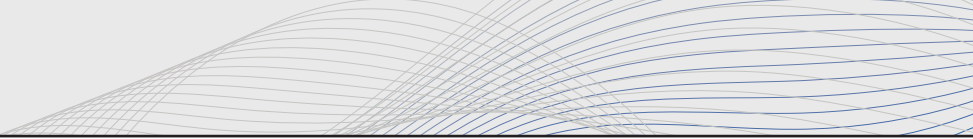
B. Financial Obligations Toward Constituents

- **Providing Social Assistance:** Many MPs are expected to offer financial support or services to their communities, such as donations to charitable activities or funding local projects.
- **Supporting Political Backers:** Some MPs provide financial rewards or employment opportunities to their supporters, creating a continuous financial burden.

The cost stages and corruption in the electoral process reflect the financial complexities faced by candidates in Jordan. Expenses begin from the moment of candidacy, intensify during the election campaign, peak on election day, and persist even after results are announced. This reality underscores the urgent need for more equitable and transparent financing policies to ensure equal opportunities among candidates and strengthen the integrity of the democratic process.

Chapter Four:

Sources of Funding and Their Impact on Transparency



The sources of funding for election campaigns in Jordan play a crucial role in determining the integrity of elections and the degree of fairness among candidates. Financial reports on electoral lists have revealed significant disparities in available resources, leading to unequal campaign capabilities. This disparity raises concerns about candidates' adherence to financial disclosure laws, the effectiveness of election spending oversight, and the impact of unofficial funding on electoral integrity.

1. Official Funding Sources (Government Support and Party Funding)

Government and party funding is intended to promote fairness among candidates. However, financial reports indicate that this type of funding remains limited and is primarily accessible to well-established parties with stable financial backing.

A. Government Support for Candidates and Parties

Although limited government funding is allocated to party-affiliated electoral lists, most candidates do not receive any direct financial support from the state. Instead, the majority rely on self-financing and external contributions to fund their campaigns.

Challenges of Government Funding

- Excludes independent candidates, creating a gap between those benefiting from government support and those running outside the party system.
- Weak oversight on spending, which may result in government funds not achieving their intended purpose of promoting fair competition.
- Continued dependence on other funding sources, such as donations and personal wealth.

B. Party Funding for Candidates

Political parties play a limited role in financially supporting their candidates. Financial reports indicate that most parties did not make significant contributions to their members' election campaigns, with a few exceptions, which reported internal member contributions as part of its financial records.

Weaknesses of Party Funding

- Most parties do not fully cover campaign expenses, forcing candidates to rely on self-financing or external donations.
- New and smaller parties often lack the financial resources to support their candidates, reducing their ability to compete effectively.

2. Self-Financing by Candidates

Self-financing remains one of the most prominent sources of election funding. Reports indicate that many electoral lists relied primarily on internal member contributions to fund their campaigns. For example, members of the Construction and Labor Party list contributed over 60,000 JOD, making it the primary source of funding for their campaign.

Advantages of Self-Financing

- Grants candidates greater independence, reducing external influence on their political decisions after election.
- Reflects candidates' seriousness and their willingness to invest in their own campaigns.
- Disadvantages of Self-Financing
- Limits opportunities for young and female candidates who lack personal wealth, making it difficult for them to compete.
- Creates an unequal electoral environment, as wealthy candidates gain a clear advantage over those with fewer financial resources.

3. Private Sector and Business Funding

Financial reports submitted by electoral lists to the IEC reveal that some electoral lists received donations from individuals or private entities, raising concerns about how private interests might influence candidates' political decisions after elections. For example, several lists reported donations, but did not disclose the donor's identity in its financial statement.

The Impact of Private Funding on Elections

Potential conflicts of interest, as candidates may feel obliged to serve their financial backers rather than the public interest.

Creates an unfair advantage for candidates with private-sector backing, leading to a power monopoly among financially privileged groups.

Lack of transparency regarding funding sources may raise legal and ethical concerns about the legitimacy of these contributions.

4. Unofficial Funding and Its Impact on Electoral Integrity

Some financial reports have shown that certain expenditures were recorded outside of official bank accounts, indicating the possibility of undocumented or informal funding. For example, the category «general and miscellaneous expenses» appears in several final account reports published on the website of the Independent Election Commission, without clear details on how the funds were spent, which opens the way to electoral corruption.

Forms of Unofficial Funding

- Direct or indirect vote-buying through cash payments or material assistance to voters.
- Leveraging personal and tribal networks to fund campaigns without documentation.
- Receiving financial support from external sources without disclosing it in financial statements.

Effects of Unofficial Funding

- Undermines election integrity and reduces fair competition among candidates.
- Increases political corruption, as candidates may become indebted to undisclosed donors.
- Weakens public trust in the democratic process, where financial influence becomes a determining factor in election outcomes.

5. Compliance with Financial Transparency and Disclosure

Although Jordanian election laws require candidates to disclose their funding sources and expenditures, many electoral lists (60% of the total number of lists) failed to submit financial reports, while others recorded incomplete or vague expenses, highlighting weaknesses in financial oversight mechanisms.

Weaknesses in Financial Disclosure

- Some electoral lists did not provide clear details on their funding sources, raising concerns about transparency.
- Certain expenses were not clearly itemised, instead being labeled under broad categories such as “miscellaneous expenses”, without further explanation.

- Not all donations were officially recorded, suggesting the existence of undisclosed campaign financing.

Proposed Reforms to Enhance Transparency

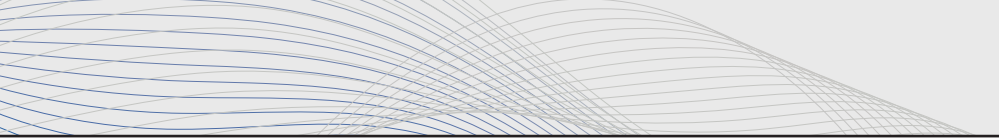
To address these issues, stronger financial oversight and disclosure requirements are necessary, including:

- More strict regulations on unofficial funding, with penalties for violations.
- Mandatory detailed financial disclosures from all electoral lists, including identification of donors.
- Strengthening financial oversight by establishing independent monitoring bodies to track election spending and detect irregularities.

Financial reports indicate significant disparities in campaign funding sources, affecting election integrity and equal opportunity among candidates. While some rely on self-financing, others benefit from party support or private donations, while unofficial funding remains a key challenge to transparency.

To ensure fair elections, authorities must strengthen financial disclosure mechanisms, enforce stricter funding regulations, and minimise the influence of political money in campaigns. This will promote a more equitable electoral environment and reinforce public confidence in the democratic process.

Chapter Five: **Women and Youth in Politics and the Impact of Costs**



The participation of women and youth in the political process is one of the most essential elements of building a more inclusive democracy that represents all segments of society. However, financial barriers remain among the most significant challenges facing these groups when running for elections. The high cost of election campaigns affects their ability to compete, leading to unfair representation of disadvantaged groups in elected bodies.

In the 2024 parliamentary elections in Jordan, out of all elected Members of Parliament, only 27 were women—with 18 winning through the women’s quota at the local district level and 3 elected on the general list. As for youth representation, only 6 MPs were under the age of 35, split equally between the general and local electoral districts. These figures illustrate the ongoing structural and financial barriers that continue to limit the meaningful political participation of women and youth, despite their demographic and societal importance.

This chapter explores the financial obstacles facing women and youth, the impact of limited funding on fair political representation, and highlights successful experiences that have overcome these challenges.

1. Financial Barriers to Women’s Participation in Elections

Despite efforts to increase women’s political participation, financial challenges continue to be a major obstacle preventing them from competing effectively in elections. Financial reports from electoral lists indicate that women candidates struggle to secure funding compared to their male counterparts.

Limited Financial Resources and Lack of Support for Women Candidates: Financial reports indicate that many female candidates rely on self-financing due to insufficient support from political parties or donors. For instance, in some non-partisan electoral lists on the district level, female candidates contributed significantly less to campaign funds compared to male candidates, limiting their ability to conduct effective advertising campaigns or organize public events.

Private Sector Hesitation to Fund Women Candidates: An analysis of the final account reports of electoral lists, published on the website of the Independent Election Commission, shows that the private sector tends to fund male candidates more than female ones, which is part of the societal bias. Male candidates are often perceived as having a higher chance of winning and, therefore, better positioned to serve the interests of financial backers. This results in a significant disparity in female candidates’ access to financial resources, limiting their ability to compete effectively.

The Influence of Cultural Norms on Women's Campaign Funding: In some regions, cultural and traditional restrictions limit women's participation in politics, as female candidacy is viewed as socially unacceptable. This perception discourages local donors and community leaders from financially supporting women candidates. Additionally, some families oppose financing female relatives' campaigns, further restricting their funding sources.

"Female candidacy is often viewed as socially unacceptable, which makes it harder for women to attract donations and support."

— Focus Group, Female Participant, Central Region

Challenges in Covering Campaign Expenses: Due to limited financial resources, female candidates struggle to cover essential campaign costs, including:

- Media advertising and printed campaign materials
- Renting campaign offices and organizing public events
- Transportation and logistical expenses required to reach different voter groups

2. Economic Barriers Preventing Youth from Running and Competing

Youth, particularly those under the age of 35, represent the future of any democratic system, yet they face significant financial challenges that prevent them from running for office or competing effectively. Many young people lack financial resources, making it difficult to afford campaign expenses.

Low Personal Income and Difficulty Securing Funding: With high unemployment rates and low-income jobs, young candidates struggle to finance their own campaigns. Financial reports show that many young candidates were unable to secure adequate funding, forcing some to run symbolically without the ability to conduct effective campaigns.

Lack of Political Party and Institutional Support: Political parties do not provide sufficient financial support for young candidates. Many parties prefer to nominate well-known figures with strong financial backgrounds, leaving young candidates without party backing. As a result, young politicians must rely on self-financing or seek funding from private sources that may not be easily accessible.

“Young candidates find themselves forced to rely on self-financing.”

— Focus Group, Male Participant, Central Region

Limited Access to Private Funding Sources: The private sector tends to favor supporting veteran candidates who are perceived as more likely to advance their interests after winning, placing young candidates at a disadvantage when it comes to securing funding. This disparity is reflected in the final account reports of electoral lists published on the website of the Independent Election Commission.

3. The Impact of Limited Funding on Fair Representation of Disadvantaged Groups

The lack of adequate funding for women and youth results in low representation in elected bodies, which directly impacts policy decisions and legislation that should reflect their needs.

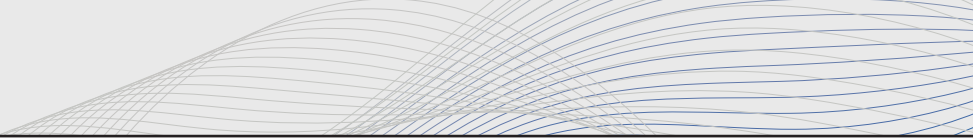
Fewer Candidates from Disadvantaged Groups: Statistics show that the proportion of women and youth who successfully ran in elections is significantly lower than other groups due to financial barriers. Many withdraw from the race due to a lack of financial support.

Impact on Political Representation Quality: Since candidates with financial resources have a greater chance of winning, elected bodies become unrepresentative of broader society. This leads to women’s and youth issues being excluded from political agendas.

4. Successful Models and Experiences in Overcoming Financial Barriers

Despite these challenges, some initiatives have successfully supported women and youth in politics by providing alternative financial resources.

Community-Supported Initiatives for Women Candidates: Some female candidates secured campaign funding through grassroots fundraising and community support, where local voters contributed donations to support candidates advocating for their interests.



NGO Programs Supporting Women and Youth: Some organisations have launched support programs to help young and female candidates run more effective campaigns, including:

- Training programs for women on campaign management.
- Financial assistance for youth candidates to support their campaign execution.

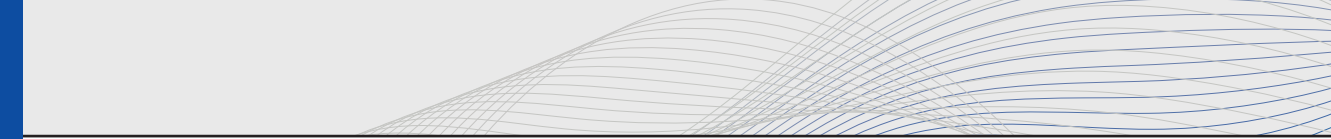
Utilising Social Media as a Cost-Effective Alternative: Some young candidates successfully ran digital election campaigns, relying on social media platforms instead of costly traditional advertising. This approach enabled them to reach a wider audience at a lower cost.

Financial barriers remain a major obstacle to women's and youth participation in Jordanian politics, directly affecting their representation in elected bodies. While some initiatives have helped mitigate these challenges, comprehensive reforms are still needed to ensure fair financial support for disadvantaged groups and create a more equitable electoral environment.

To achieve this, new policies must be introduced, including: Sustainable government funding for underrepresented groups, greater transparency in election spending, and financial assistance programs allowing all candidates to participate in democratic processes without financial obstacles.

Chapter Six:

The Impact of Political Costs on the Democratic Process



The high cost of political participation in Jordan is a major obstacle to achieving a fair and inclusive democracy. The cost of running for office and election campaign expenses directly impact electoral integrity, fair competition among candidates, and representation of diverse groups in elected bodies. Additionally, the influence of political money contributes to corruption, weak accountability, and declining public trust in the electoral system.

1. The Impact of High Costs on Electoral Fairness

Unequal Opportunities Among Candidates: The high cost of election campaigns means that candidates with greater financial resources or strong financial backers have a higher chance of winning, while independent candidates, youth, and women face major funding challenges. Financial reports from recent elections indicate that some electoral lists spent tens of thousands of Jordanian dinars on campaign advertising, while other lists had minimal budgets, affecting their ability to reach voters effectively.

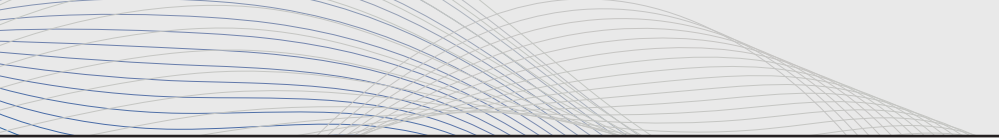
Reduced Opportunities for Independent and Disadvantaged Candidates: Independent candidates struggle to compete with large parties or politically connected candidates backed by the private sector or influential networks. Expensive campaigns rely on media and advertising tools that independent candidates cannot afford, making it harder for them to influence public opinion.

Impact on Electoral Integrity: When money dominates politics, political programs and ideas become secondary to a candidate's ability to fund advertising and voter outreach. In some cases, high campaign costs encourage illegal practices, such as vote-buying or offering financial or social benefits in exchange for voter support.

2. The Relationship Between Political Costs and Corruption

The Need to Recover Campaign Expenses After Winning: Many elected representatives feel pressured to recover the money spent on their campaigns, making them vulnerable to financial compromises in office. Domestic observation reports suggest that some parliamentarians engage in granting privileges to specific entities or voting in favor of laws that benefit financial supporters to ensure continued financial backing.

Political Money and Its Impact on Decision-Making: When candidates rely on private or political entities for campaign funding, they become indebted to those backers, affecting their ability to make independent decisions in parliament. This leads to public policies that serve private interests rather than the general population, violating principles of transparency and accountability.



Strengthening Corrupt Networks Within Parliament: The high cost of running for office forces some candidates to seek illegal funding sources, such as unreported donations, which contribute to corrupt networks within elected bodies. The higher the cost of elections, the more likely it is that successful candidates will owe favors to influential backers or engage in political activities to compensate for their campaign expenditures.

3. The Impact of Political Money on Parliamentary Performance and Accountability

Weak Political Accountability: When money plays a decisive role in elections, MPs become less focused on holding the government accountable or defending voter interests and more concerned with maintaining relationships with financial backers to secure support for future elections. This results in weaker parliamentary oversight and a lack of policies that serve citizens' needs.

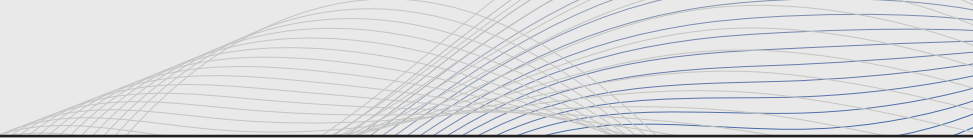
Shift Toward Private Interests Over National Issues: In some cases, MPs become more occupied with serving their financial supporters than addressing national policy agendas.

Declining Parliamentary Performance: Since some MPs secure parliamentary seats based on financial backing rather than political programs, their performance in legislative and oversight roles tends to be weaker, reducing the effectiveness of democratic governance.

4. The Impact of Costs on Public Trust in the Electoral System

Voter Distrust in Elections: When elections become dominated by political money, citizens lose confidence in democracy, feeling that elections no longer reflect their will but instead favor those who can afford expensive campaigns. This leads to declining trust in elections as a tool for political change and contributes to lower voter turnout.

Increased Political and Social Exclusion: Youth, women, and low-income groups feel that the electoral system is not designed to empower them, leading to disengagement from political participation. Many young people believe that running for office is impossible without major financial backing, reducing their actual involvement in politics.



The high cost of political participation in Jordan is a major obstacle to a fair democratic process. Expensive election campaigns lead to unequal opportunities among candidates, increased financial influence in politics, rising corruption, and weakened parliamentary accountability. Additionally, political money affects the quality of legislation, widening the gap between citizens and their representatives.

Reducing the financial influence in politics is key to strengthening democracy, ensuring fair elections, and rebuilding public trust in the electoral system.

Proposed Reforms to Address These Challenges

- Imposing strict spending limits to ensure fair competition among all candidates.
- Enhancing transparency in campaign financing by requiring candidates to disclose all funding sources.
- Strengthening oversight on political money post-elections to prevent financial backers from influencing policies.

Chapter Seven: **The Financial Cost of the 2024 House of Representatives Elections**

Parliamentary elections represent a significant political and financial milestone, as candidate lists require substantial financial resources to cover campaign expenses. Financial data collected from electoral lists running in the 2024 Jordanian parliamentary elections reveal considerable disparities in spending, which vary depending on the type of district (local or national) and the scale of the campaign. These disparities raise concerns about equal opportunity and financial transparency in the electoral process.

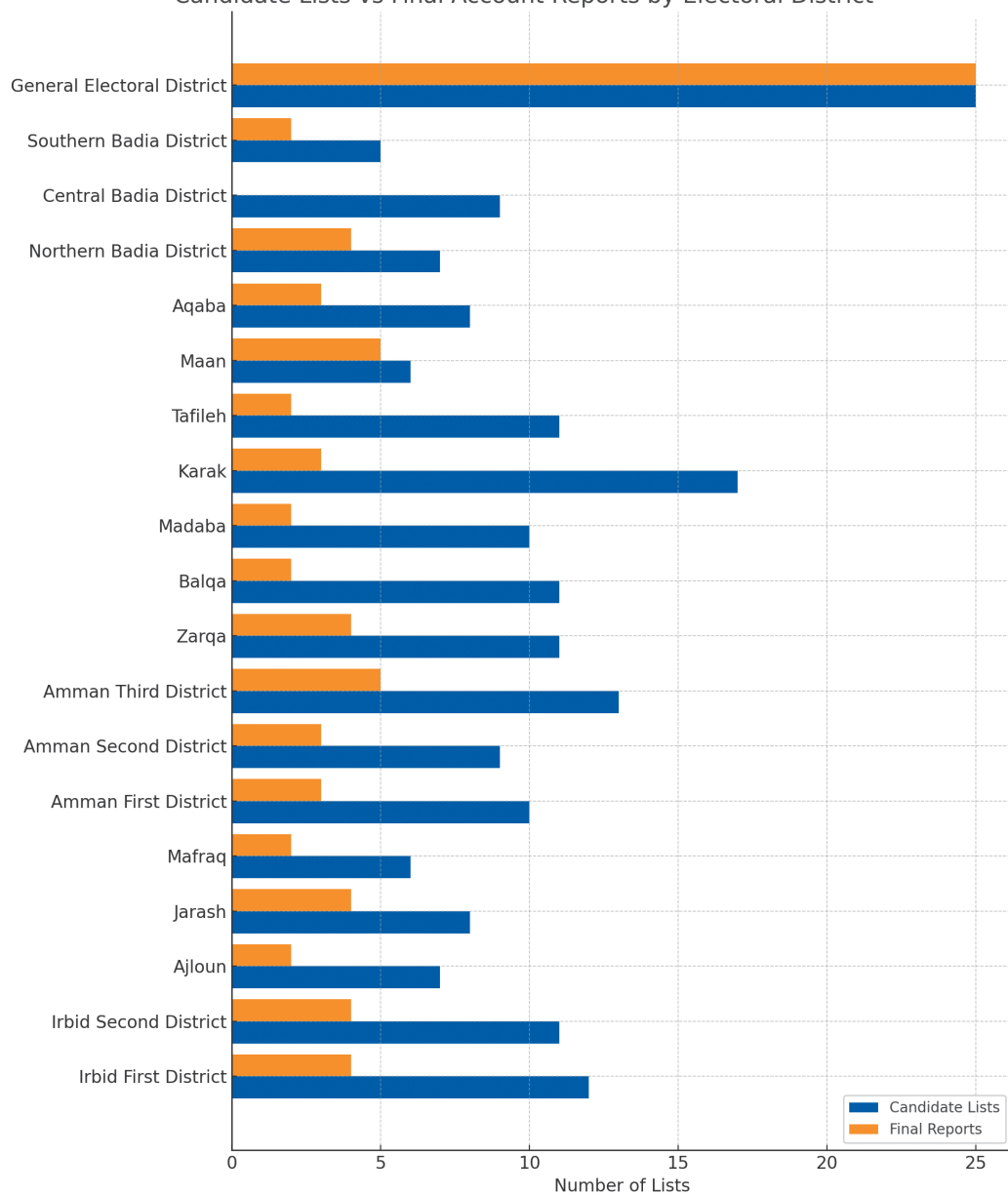
The report team analysed the financial data contained in the final account reports of the candidate lists running in the 2024 House of Representatives elections—both local district lists and party lists contesting the national district—as published by the Independent Election Commission.

1. Final Account Reports

The following table shows the number of candidate lists that submitted final account reports to the Independent Election Commission and had them published on its website (up to the date of the study's preparation):

Electoral District	Number of Candidate Lists	Number of Lists that Submitted Final Account Reports
Irbid First District	12	4
Irbid Second District	11	4
Ajloun	7	2
Jarash	8	4
Mafraq	6	2
Amman First District	10	3
Amman Second District	9	3
Amman Third District	13	5
Zarqa	11	4
Balqa	11	2
Madaba	10	2
Karak	17	3
Tafileh	11	2
Maan	6	5
Aqaba	8	3
Northern Badia District	7	4
Central Badia District	9	0
Southern Badia District	5	2
General Electoral District	25	25
Total	197	79

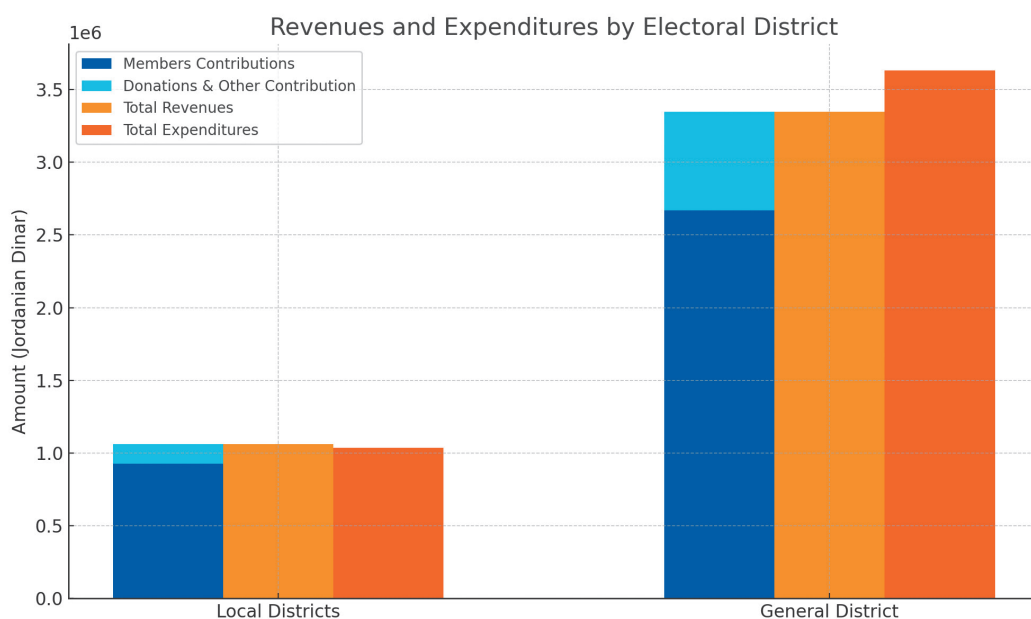
Candidate Lists vs Final Account Reports by Electoral District



The table shows that only 54 local lists submitted final account reports and had them published on the Independent Election Commission’s website—representing 31.4%. In contrast, all party lists running in the national district submitted their reports, representing 100%.

2. Total Revenues and Expenditures

Electoral District	Revenues (Jordanian Dinar)			Total Expenditures (Jordanian Dinar)
	Members Contributions	Donations & Other Contribution	Total Revenues	
Local Districts	927,051	132,980	1,060,031	1,035,650
General District	2,670,997	677,704	3,348,701	3,633,414
Total	3,598,048	810,684	4,408,732	4,669,064

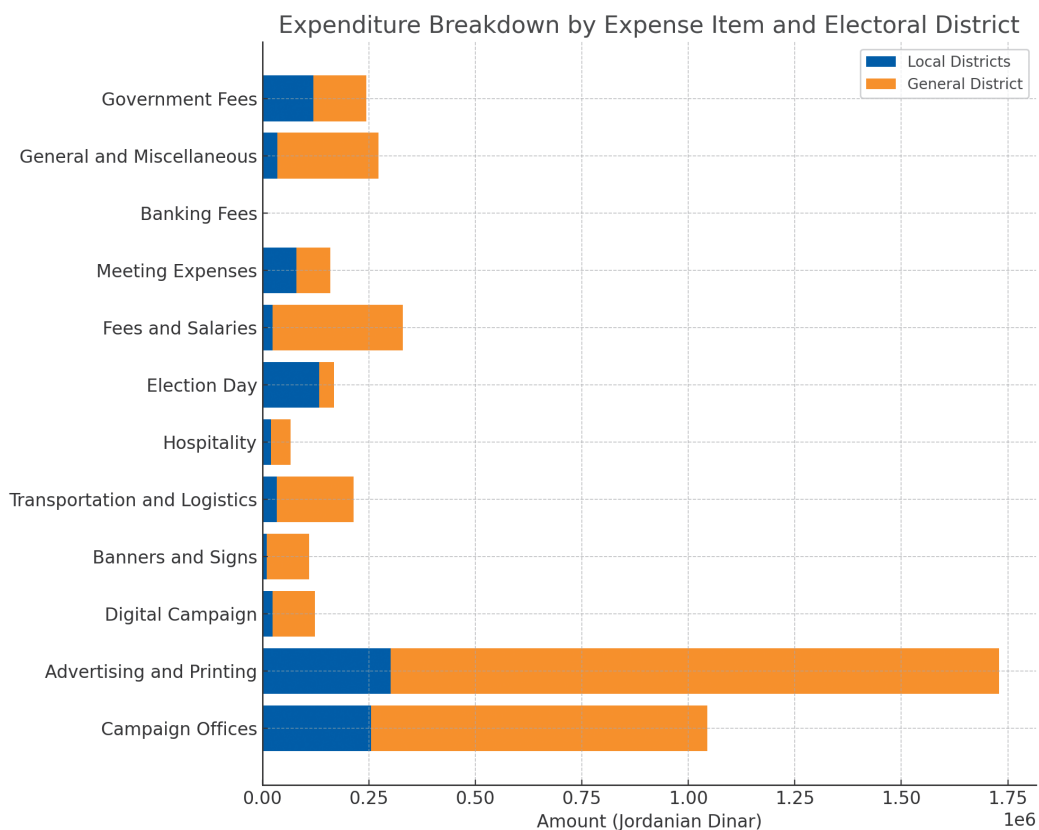


The data shows that the primary funding source for electoral lists was member contributions, which made up the bulk of campaign financing. Donations and other contributions were more limited in comparison.

Expenditures were distributed across various items, including campaign offices, advertising and publicity, digital campaign infrastructure (e.g., websites or social media ads), transportation and logistics, hospitality, meetings, election day expenses, professional fees, campaign team salaries, banking fees, government fees, and a miscellaneous category.

3. Expenditure Breakdown

Expense Item	Local Districts	General District	Total (Jordanian Dinar)
Campaign Offices	255,210	789,826	1,045,036
Advertising and Printing	300,411	1,429,495	1,729,906
Digital Campaign	24,085	99,006	109,556
Banners and Signs	10,550	99,006	109,556
Transportation and Logistics	33,193	181,292	214,485
Hospitality	20,493	45,515	66,008
Election Day	133,573	34,707	168,280
Fees and Salaries	23,349	306,113	329,462
Meeting Expenses	79,855	79,266	159,121
Banking Fees	180	338	518
General and Miscellaneous	34,951	237,496	272,447
Government Fees	119,800	123,910	243,710
Total	1,035,650	3,633,414	4,669,064



4. Average Revenues and Expenditures by District Type

The following table shows the average revenues and expenditures for local and national districts. However, it is important to note that it is not possible to calculate a reliable average campaign cost per electoral district due to the lack of sufficient financial reports from all local districts and the incomplete nature of the available data.

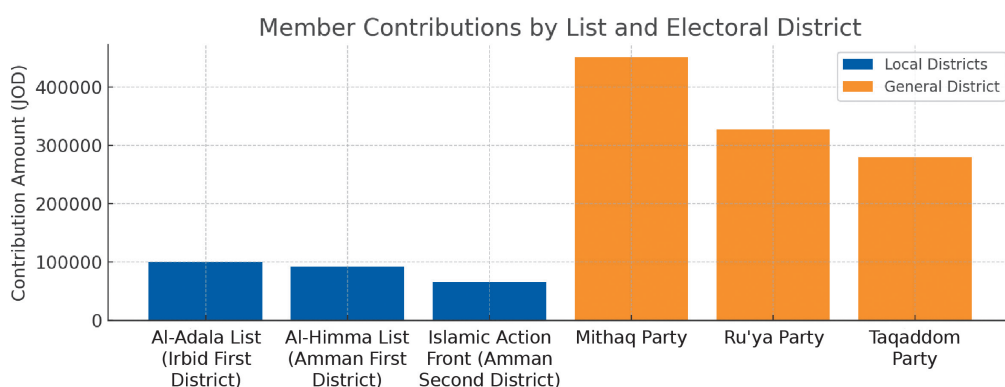
For the national district, the average revenue per list was approximately JOD 258,000, while the average expenditure was JOD 280,000.

Electoral District	Average Revenue	Aerage Expenditure
Local Districts	19,630 JOD	19,179 JOD
General District	133,948 JOD	145,337 JOD

5. Highest-Grossing and Highest-Spending Lists

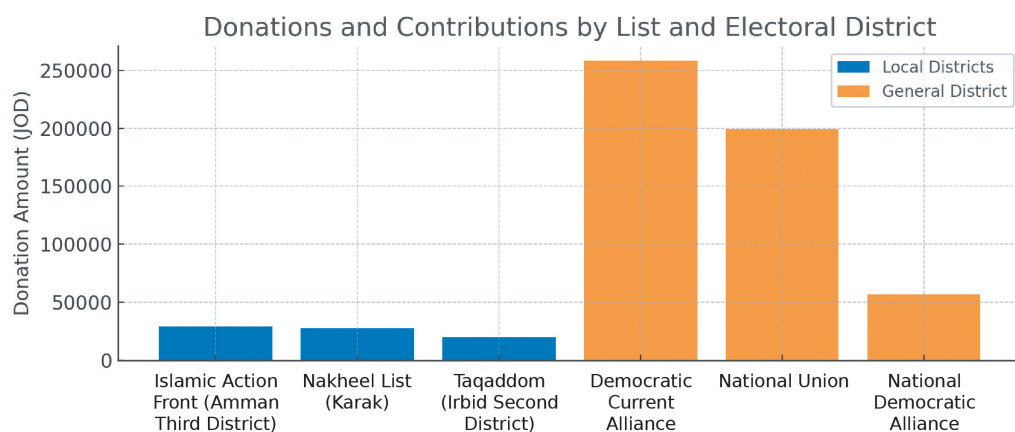
The following table shows the top three lists in both the local and national districts in terms of contributions from list members.

Electoral District	List Name	Member Contributions
Local Districts	Al-Adala List (Irbid First District)	100,000 JOD
Local Districts	Al-Himma List (Amman First District)	91,657 JOD
Local Districts	Islamic Action Front (Amman Second District)	65,700 JOD
General District	Mithaq Party	450,000 JOD
General District	Ru'ya Party	326,982 JOD
General District	Taqaddom Party	280,000 JOD

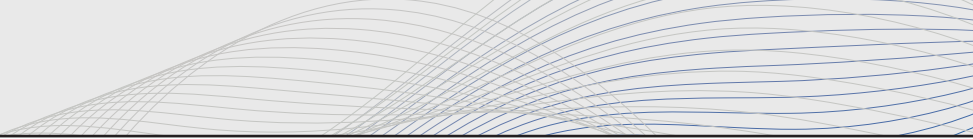


The following table shows the top three lists in both the local and national districts in terms of donations and contributions received.

Electoral District	List Name	Donations and Contributions
Local Districts	Islamic Action Front (Amman Third District)	29,237 JOD
Local Districts	Nakheel List (Karak)	28,000 JOD
Local Districts	Taqaddom (Irbid Second District)	20,000 JOD
General District	Democratic Current Alliance	258,401 JOD
General District	National Union	199,090 JOD
General District	National Democratic Alliance	57,288 JOD



Chapter Eight: **Regional Comparison of Parliamentary Candidacy Costs**



The cost of running for parliamentary elections is one of the most influential factors shaping the nature of political competition and the ability of independent candidates and disadvantaged groups to access decision-making positions. This chapter compares the financial cost of candidacy in Jordan with a number of Arab countries that share similar political and economic contexts—namely Tunisia, Morocco, and Lebanon—to offer a deeper understanding of whether Jordan’s electoral environment imposes higher or lower financial barriers compared to its regional peers.

In Jordan’s 2016 parliamentary elections, despite the adoption of the proportional list system, campaign costs were relatively lower than those recorded in the 2024 elections. This was due to limited use of digital media at the time and weak competition within electoral lists. By comparison, reports from Tunisia indicate that the implementation of the mixed-list system did not reduce costs as expected; instead, it led to increased spending due to internal list competition and personalised campaigning. This highlights the importance of designing an electoral system that reflects local economic and social realities rather than replicating external models.

1. Jordan

Data analysis indicates that the average cost of running in Jordan’s parliamentary elections ranges between 20,000 and 150,000 Jordanian dinars (approximately USD 28,000 to 210,000). This includes media campaign costs, salaries for field teams, office rentals, as well as expenses related to tribal mobilisation and transportation. These costs vary significantly depending on the type of district (local or national) and the candidate’s reliance on self-funding or donations.

2. Tunisia

Although Tunisia provides partial public funding for elections, many candidates have indicated that effective campaigning requires personal expenditures exceeding government support. International observation reports estimate that the average campaign cost for an individual candidate ranges between 50,000 and 100,000 Tunisian dinars (approximately USD 16,000 to 32,000). Costs tend to be much higher in large constituencies or for well-known candidates. Spending on social media has become one of the most prominent expense categories in recent Tunisian elections.

3. Morocco

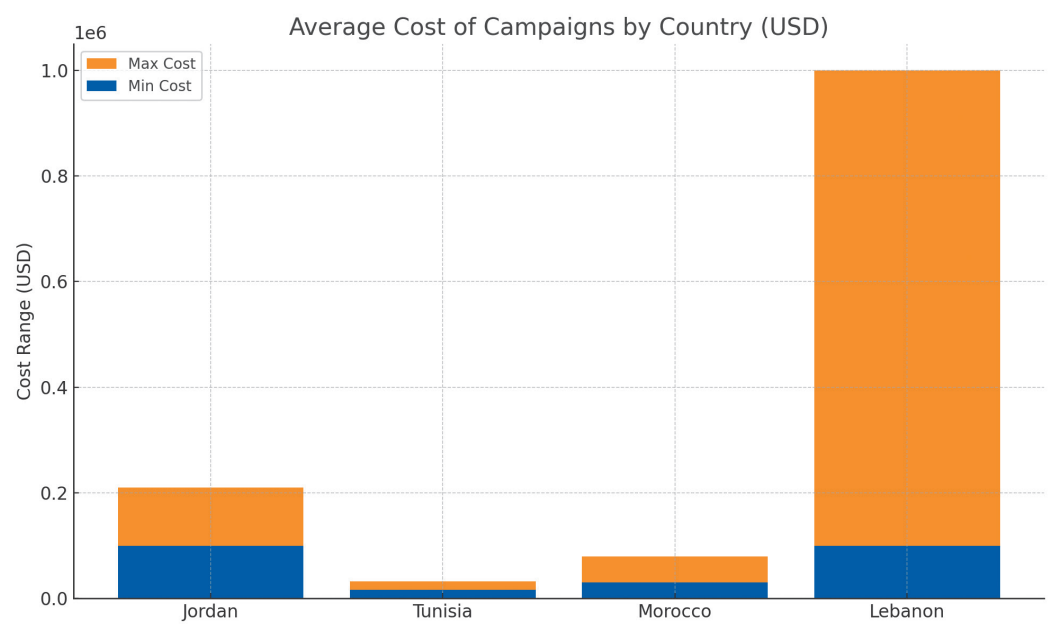
In Morocco’s legislative elections, campaign costs vary between candidates representing well-established political parties and independent or underfunded candidates. Some journalistic and academic reports estimate that the average cost ranges from 300,000 to 800,000 Moroccan dirhams (USD 30,000 to 80,000). These expenses include printing, advertising, voter mobilisation efforts, and “hidden” costs such as local network influence and traditional media usage.

4. Lebanon

Lebanon is considered one of the most expensive countries in terms of parliamentary candidacy. Observation reports show that campaign costs can reach, and sometimes exceed, one million USD—particularly in districts with intense sectarian competition or heavy reliance on television coverage and electoral crimes such as vote-buying. Spending includes temporary social services, donations to associations, support for local infrastructure, and traditional and digital advertising. The absence of an effective spending cap is a major reason behind the inflated costs in Lebanon.

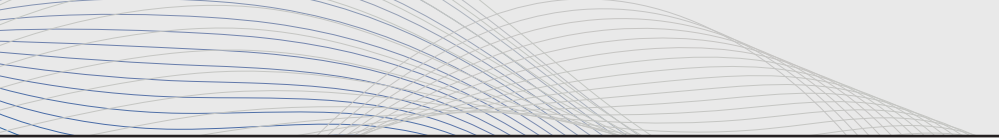
Comparative Table: Average Cost of Running for Parliamentary Elections

Country	Average Cost (Local Currency)	Average Cost (USD)	Notes
Jordan	70,000 – 150,000 JOD	100,000 – 210,000	Self-funding, tribal mobilisation
Tunisia	50,000 – 100,000 TND	16,000 – 32,000	Partial state funding, strong digital presence
Morocco	300,000 – 800,000 MAD	30,000 – 80,000	Varies by party strength and district
Lebanon	1,500,000,000 – 3,000,000,000 LBP	100,000 – 1,000,000+	High inflation, vote-buying, unregulated campaign spending



Chapter Nine:

Recommendations and Proposed Solutions



After analysing the factors influencing the cost of political participation in Jordan, identifying the barriers facing candidates—especially disadvantaged groups like women and youth—and examining the impact of political money on election integrity and public trust, it is essential to propose practical solutions to reduce election costs, enhance transparency, and strengthen accountability.

This chapter outlines proposed legislative reforms, mechanisms to increase transparency in campaign financing, and support strategies for underrepresented groups.

1. Legislative Reforms to Reduce Election Costs

Implementing legislative reforms to reduce campaign expenses is essential for improving democratic integrity and ensuring fair competition among candidates in Jordan.

Setting an Election Spending Cap: Although laws exist to limit campaign expenditures, weak enforcement has allowed some lists to exceed spending limits. To address this, the following measures are needed:

- Adjusting spending caps based on district size: The spending limit should be proportionate to the number of voters and the geographical size of the district to ensure fairness among candidates in different areas.
- Higher penalties for exceeding spending limits: Lists exceeding the legal limit should face severe penalties, such as heavy fines or disqualification from the election process.
- Mandatory financial disclosure: Election lists must submit detailed financial reports on their campaign expenditures, audited by independent oversight bodies, even if they fail to win any seats.

Regulating Media and Advertising Spending: The media plays a critical role in election campaigns, requiring the following regulations:

- Restrictions on paid political ads: To ensure fairness, advertising regulations should prevent wealthy candidates from dominating voter outreach through paid media.
- Providing free or low-cost media space: Official media channels should offer free or discounted airtime for all candidates to ensure equal access to the public.
- Stronger regulation of social media advertising: As digital platforms become more influential in elections, social media companies should be required to disclose political ad spending to enhance transparency and prevent manipulation.

Restricting Private Funding and Political Money Influence: To limit the impact of financial interests on politics, the following measures should be implemented:

- Capping private donations from individuals and corporations to prevent disproportionate influence on elected officials.
- Mandating full financial disclosure by requiring candidates to publicly report their funding sources to eliminate conflicts of interest.

Proposed Implementation Steps:

- Establish a joint committee composed of the Independent Election Commission, the Audit Bureau, and the Opinion and Legislation Bureau to update campaign finance legislation and enforce stricter penalties for exceeding spending limits.
- Draft executive guidelines outlining how to calculate spending ceilings based on the number of voters and geographic area.
- Develop a unified electronic system for submitting and auditing financial reports during and after the campaign period.

2. Mechanisms to Enhance Transparency in Campaign Financing

Strengthening the Role of the Independent Election Commission in Monitoring Campaigns: To promote transparency and accountability, it is recommended to enhance the role of the Independent Election Commission in monitoring election campaigns and detecting financial violations. The commission has regulatory authority to identify illegal financing practices and ensure compliance with electoral laws and regulations.

Raising Voter Awareness About Political Money: To reduce the influence of political money, the following actions are suggested:

- Launching national awareness campaigns to highlight the risks of political money and its impact on election integrity, encouraging voters to make informed decisions.
- Engaging civil society and the media in monitoring election financing, which helps report illegal financial activities and strengthens community-based oversight of campaign expenditures.

Proposed Implementation Steps:

- Develop a digital platform on the Independent Election Commission's website to publish spending and funding reports for each list and candidate.

- Launch an awareness program, in partnership with civil society organizations, on how to report financial violations.
- Organize workshops for civil society and media on techniques for tracking political financing.

3. Supporting Disadvantaged Groups in the Electoral Process

The participation of disadvantaged groups, particularly youth and women, is essential for enhancing democracy and ensuring fair representation of all segments of society. To ensure effective participation, several measures should be adopted to remove financial and logistical barriers and strengthen their presence in political parties.

Providing Financial Support for Young and Female Candidates:

- **Establishing a Special Election Fund for Youth and Women:** It is recommended to establish a dedicated election fund to support youth and female candidates, enabling them to run their campaigns without financial barriers. This fund can be financed by the government and civil society organisations to ensure its sustainability and effectiveness. It should cover advertising costs, election events, and media promotion, facilitating greater voter outreach and improving candidates' chances of success.
- **Reducing or Waiving Candidacy Fees for Youth and Women:** Candidacy fees pose a financial barrier for many young and female candidates. Reducing or exempting them from certain fees would encourage more participation and expand the candidate pool.

Reducing Financial Burdens Through Logistical Support

- **Allocating Free Election Spaces for Public Meetings:** Renting venues for election gatherings is a financial burden on candidates. It is recommended that local authorities provide free or low-cost public spaces, especially for youth and female candidates, to hold events and engage with voters.

Strengthening the Presence of Women and Youth in Political Parties

- **Requiring Parties to Dedicate a Percentage of Their Budgets to Support Youth and Female Candidates:** A mandatory percentage of party budgets should be allocated to support youth and female candidates. This financial support can include training, promotional efforts, or logistical assistance, ensuring their fair representation and active participation.

- **Financial Incentives for Parties That Increase Female and Youth Representation:** Governments and donors can offer financial incentives to parties that increase the percentage of youth and women in their electoral lists. This would encourage inclusive and diverse political representation.
- **Promoting Training and Capacity-Building Programs:** Training and capacity-building are essential for empowering youth and women to run effective campaigns. Workshops and training programs can focus on leadership, communication, and campaign management, improving their political competency while reducing campaign costs.

Reforming the Political Party Funding System

Amend the financial contribution system supporting political parties by linking state funding to the number of seats won in elections and the number of candidates nominated. The system should also include clear incentive-based indicators that promote the representation of women and youth. This would:

- Enable broad-based parties to sustain institutional work.
- Encourage smaller parties to grow and participate.
- Motivate parties to nominate women and youth by providing additional financial support to those that exceed specific representation thresholds (e.g., 30% women and 20% youth on candidate lists).
- Promote competition based on programs and representation rather than financial power.

Proposed Implementation Steps:

- Issue executive regulations from the Independent Election Commission that define criteria for distributing financial support based on these indicators.
- Conduct annual reviews of party funding, linking it to their adherence to inclusive representation standards, and publish transparent reports on fund allocation and its impact on party development and disadvantaged group representation.
- Issue guidelines for establishing a dedicated fund to support the candidacy of women and youth, including clear application procedures and eligibility criteria.
- Coordinate with municipalities to provide free venues for young and female candidates during campaign periods.
- Require parties, through special instructions, to submit budgets showing the share allocated to supporting women and youth.
- Develop a standardised training manual, in partnership with international organisations, on "Running a Campaign on a Limited Budget" and distribute it to young and female candidates.

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Dr. Muath AbuDalu is a political scientist and researcher specialising in governance, social movements, and anti-corruption in the MENA region. He is currently a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Bielefeld University, where he leads a project on humanitarian logistics funded by the German Foundation for Peace Research. From 2022 to 2024, he served as Regional Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa at Transparency International, overseeing anti-corruption initiatives and donor engagement, particularly in Iraq.

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With over 17 years of experience across academia, diplomacy, and international development, he has held positions at the Canadian and British Embassies in Amman, Elbarlament, and the Max Planck Institute. His research and policy work have been published in peer-reviewed journals and policy platforms, and he regularly contributes to regional and international conferences.

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